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ABSTRACT

The induction of counselors to the profession is given as little attention in the literature as it is in schools. The importance of induction cannot be stressed enough for counselors, but education is one of the few professions in this society which expects new members to assume the responsibilities of experienced members. A study was conducted to examine the induction processes used for new school counselors and the problems encountered by these counselors. New school counselors (N=40) identified by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction completed the Conditions for Professional Practice: Counselor's Perceptions questionnaire, providing demographic information, information on school characteristics, and responses to six vignettes describing situations new counselors might encounter. The vignettes concerned the areas of client-counselor relationship, public presentation, psychological education, testing, parent-counselor relationship, and teacher-counselor relationship. Respondents most frequently reported concerns with clients, teachers, and parents, in that order, suggesting that concerns with interpersonal dynamics were encountered with great frequency. Counselors functioning in rural schools were the most likely to report receiving no help in resolving their concerns. Significant differences were found between rural and urban counselors in the areas of age and teaching experience, with urban counselors being older and having taught longer than rural counselors. The results suggest that new counselors are expected to function in isolation with minimal support and supervision. New counselors, especially in rural settings, reported receiving little support in resolution of concerns they encountered. (NB)

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Induction of Counselors to the Profession

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With all the rhetoric on education appearing in the form of reports, legislative proposals, opinion polls, and statements from the dominant professional associations, little attention is given to counselors in the schools (Aubrey, 1985). The report, High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (Boyer, 1983), until the release of the report, Keeping the Options Open (Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986) was the only significant national report even to mention counselors in the school. The real regard for counselors in the schools has never matched the professed regard. Referred to as 'a child' of the progressive education movement (Cremin, 1961) counselors in schools find themselves in ill-defined roles, without support and vulnerable to budget reductions (Peers, 1985). The paradox is that this erosion of support is coming at a time when the expectations for schools are increasing. The Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling (1986) recommended that counselors assume a more central role in the schools. With regard to the preparation of counselors the report noted that in counselor education programs "...the number of courses focusing on the school-based aspects of counseling have decreased..." (Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986, p. 28). The report recommended that counselors in the schools demonstrate specific competencies to function in the schools. Furthermore, that these competencies be incorporated into certification and accreditation standards. The expectation appears to be that counselors for the schools must complete a preparation program with a focus on the schools in order to assume a more central role in the schools.

Education is one of the few 'professions' in this society which expects 'new' members to assume the same responsibilities as experienced members of the profession. We expect 'new' teachers to assume the same responsibilities as the experienced teachers. We expect 'new' counselors to assume the same responsibilities as the experienced counselors. The reality is that 'new' counselors in the schools are confronted with a 'sink or swim' situation no matter what the focus of the counselor preparation program. Little support is given to counselors as they adapt to a new role. A role which is frequently in conflict with their previous positions as teachers (Kehas & Morse, 1970; Kehas & Morse, 1971) sometimes results in ambivalence and uncertainty. White (1985) stated "...little research has been reported about the process of (socialization) and how it works for counselors." The little research which does exist suggests changes in participants resulting from preparation are negated as a result of experience (Munger, Myers, & Brown, 1964). Wasson and

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Stowig (1965), from a social-psychological perspective, examined counselors functioning in schools as isolates versus in multiple counselor settings. After one year isolated counselors were more satisfied and used teachers, as well as administrators, as primary reference groups.

Whereas, the non-isolated counselors looked to the 'profession' for leadership and read more. The authors suggested as a result of isolation, counselors look at the dominant group for reference and adopt its attitudes and behaviors. In an earlier study (Kaplan, 1964) the 'new' counselors who were isolated reported a greater number of problems in performing their duties than other 'new' counselors. Warnath and Shelton (1976) stated the stress counselors experience is frequently magnified by professional isolation.

The induction of counselors to the profession is given little attention in the literature and the one national report on counselors in the schools (Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986) does not even consider the process. It appears to assume the 'sink or swim' approach to the induction of the school counselor to the profession. The importance of the induction period cannot be stressed enough for counselors in schools given the initial ambivalence in roles, professional isolation, and general difficulty in practicing new behaviors.

This study focused upon the following research questions:

a. What induction processes are used for 'new' school counselors?

b. What types of problems do 'new' school counselors encounter?

c. What support is provided to 'new' school counselors to resolve the problems?

METHODS

Subjects: The Iowa Department of Public Instruction identified 63 'new' counselors functioning in the State during 1985-86. These counselors were sent the questionnaire, Conditions for Professional Practice: Counselor's Perceptions, during May, 1986. Eighty (N=51) percent of the identified 'new' counselors responded. However, only 40 of the counselors were actually new to the profession. The remaining 11 had experience as counselors in other schools. They were new to the school but not new to the profession. This study focused upon those new to the profession.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire, Conditions for Professional Practice: Counselor's Perceptions, consisted of three sections. The first section requested basic demographic information while the second section, solicited information about the school characteristics. The third section, consisted of six vignettes describing situations 'new' counselors might encounter. The respondents were asked to indicate if they had experienced a concern similar to the one described in the

vignette. In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate who provided the greatest assistance in the resolution of the concern. The vignettes were designed to reflect concerns in the following areas: client-counselor relationship; public presentation; psychological education; testing; parent-counselor relation-ship; and teacher-counselor relationship.

RESULTS

The analyses presented in this section are based upon the type of school. Previous research implies there is a direct relationship between the type of school and satisfaction of educators (Kaplan, 1964; Moracco, Butcke, & McEwen, 1984; Matthes & Duffy, 1987). The type of school was defined as:

Rural: less than 2,500 in population or less than 1,000 persons per square mile.

Urban: greater than 2,500 population.

Suburban: contiguous to urban area and greater than 2,500 population or 1,000 persons per square mile.

The characteristics of the 'new' counselors in Iowa schools during 1985-86 are summarized in Table 1.

Insert Table 1

Of the 40 'new' counselors 35% percent (N=14) were functioning in rural schools, 45% (N=18) in urban schools, and 20% (N=8) in suburban schools. There were significant differences between the counselors in urban versus rural schools on the dimensions of age, years taught, and years taught in the present school. Those in urban schools were older and had taught longer than those in the rural schools. It should also be noted there was a disproportionate number of females functioning as counselors in rural settings than males. The reverse was true in suburban schools. There was disproportionate number of males functioning as counselors in suburban schools. There were only two counselors who had not completed at least the masters degree. Twenty-five percent (N=10) reported completing a masters degree plus 30. Sixty percent (N=24) of the counselors were prepared by an institution in the state.

Conditions for Practice: Concern is expressed in recent reports about the conditions for professional practice which confront educators daily. Many of the recommendations evolving from the reform movement in education are designed to improve conditions for professional practice in the schools. What are conditions like for 'new' counselors in the schools? The data in Table 2 gives some indication of the conditions which exist and the degree of support 'new' counselors receive.

Insert Table 2

Seventy percent (N=28) of the counselors were serving one attendance center with the assignment to multiple attendance centers most frequent in urban school districts. Counselors serving elementary schools were most frequently assigned multiple attendance centers. Eighty percent (N=32) of the counselors were given full-time assignments. Over fifty percent (N=23) of the counselors were the only counselors assigned to a particular attendance center. The difference between the rural school districts (1: 261) versus urban school districts (1: 490) on the dimension of counselor-student ratio was significant. The ratio was lower in rural school districts. The supervision of counselors seems to be the responsibility of the building principal. Resources for referral and consultation seem to be available. Of particular interest was the low percentage of counselors reporting the availability of referral resources in special education. This lack appears to be greatest in the rural school districts. Percent of time a secretary was assigned to the counselor was greater in suburban school districts than rural and urban. In fact, the percentage of time a secretary was available was higher in urban as opposed to rural school districts.

Another component of this study examined adjustments in the school district to accommodate a 'new' counselor. Only one counselor indicated that the normal load had been adjusted. Every other 'new' counselor was expected to assume the same responsibilities as experienced counselors. When asked if a mentor was assigned to them during the past year over 77% (N=31) indicated 'No'. The differences among the type of schools is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Mentors for 'new' counselors are not used with any great frequency. When asked if discretionary funds were available approximately 70% (N=28) of the new counselors responded in the affirmative. There were no significant differences between the type of school districts.

Problems Encountered and Support: Of particular interest was the type of problems 'new' counselors encountered and the source of assistance in resolution of the problem. The respondents were asked to indicate if a vignette described a similar concern they had experienced during the year. If yes, then they were asked to indicate who helped them resolve their concern. There were a total of six vignettes. A vignette was used to describe the following: client-counselor relationship; public presentation; psychological education; parent-counselor relationship; testing; and teacher-counselor relationship. The results of this section of the questionnaire appear in Table 4.

Insert Table 4

Of particular interest was the type of problems 'new' counselors encountered and the source of help they received. If one examines the frequency of concerns encountered it is noted that concerns with clients, teachers, and parents, in that order, were most frequently cited. It appears that concerns surrounding interpersonal dynamics were encountered with greater frequency. The counselors functioning in rural schools were most likely not to receive help in resolution of their concern. Whether this sense of isolation described earlier might be fostered by this lack of help in resolution of concerns is quite possible. The unique contributions counselors might make are diminished by the professional isolation as they seek support from the primary referent; teachers and administrators.

DISCUSSION

Within the past decade the concept of professional development has gained importance. It is now generally accepted that educators like other professionals move through a series of developmental stages (Fuller & Bown, 1975). Although there are variations on the theme, the issue of socialization or induction of individuals into the profession has gained national attention in education (Schlechty, 1985). The results of this pilot study suggest, however, the primary mode of induction used for counselors in the schools could at best be identified as 'sink or swim'. The 'new' counselor is expected to perform like an "olde salt" from the first day. There are no adjustments in the responsibilities and frequently no mentor assigned to help them. The 'new' school counselor frequently functions in isolation without support of a colleague with similar preparation and perspective. The immediate supervisor of counselors appears to be the building principal. If the results reported by Lampe (1985) could be extrapolated to this group of principals you might expect one out of five to have received formal preparation in the area of guidance. It is possible that we expect 'new' counselors to function in isolation without a mentor under the supervision of an administrator who has no formal preparation about what counselors are to do in the schools. The issue is even magnified further for those counselors in rural schools when one realizes the frequency with which they reported no assistance in the resolution of a reported concern. It is not surprising that changes resulting from preparation as a counselor are negated after a year and the 'new' counselor adopts teachers and administrators as the primary professional referents. Such circumstances create the vulnerability that counselors in the schools are experiencing (Peer, 1985). Given the nature of the process of induction into the profession it is a wonder so many counselors learn how to 'swim'.

Schlechty (1985) identified eight elements of the induction process common in other professions. For example, other professions have clearly stated, well articulated, and generally understood expectations and norms. In addition, you will find distinct stages and statuses within the profession. They rely greatly on intensive

clinical supervision, demonstration, coaching, and constant corrective feedback by real practitioners in real situations. If, indeed, there is a shared concern about the induction of counselors in the schools, and one accepts these concepts and others identified by Schlechty (1985), a serious examination of present practices must occur. The responsibility for ensuring the process, governed by the concepts set forth by Schlechty (1985), is not solely that of university-based counselor educators. It is a responsibility that transcends setting, and has implications for the conditions for practice. Adequate time and support are but a few conditions the schools must create--not to mention changes in existing cultural norms of schools which will tolerate failure and encourage a diverse perspective among the faculty of schools.

SUMMARY

The results of this pilot study suggest that 'new' counselors are expected to function in isolation with minimal support and supervision. 'New' counselors, especially in rural settings, receive little support in resolution of concerns they encounter. Although efforts are being made to improve the process of induction of teachers to the profession there appears to be little recognition of the importance of this phase of professional development in actual practice or in the literature. As reform is considered (Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, 1986) it must be recognized that counselor education is only one aspect of professional development.

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TABLE 1: Characteristics of New Counselors (N =40) By Type of School District.

Characteristic		Rural (N=14)	Urban (N=18)	Suburban (N=8)
AGE		$\bar{X}$= 34.71 * SD= 5.99	$\bar{X}$= 41.06 * SD= 7.8	$\bar{X}$= 38.12 SD= 7.41
SEX	Female:	30.8% (N=12)	23.1% (N=9)	2.6% (N=1)
	Male:	5.1% (N=2)	20.5% (N=8)	17.9% (N=7)
DEGREE	B.A.	2.5%	2.5%	--
	M.A.	30 %	25 %	15%
	M.A. +30	2.5%	15 %	5%
	Ph.D./Ed.D.	--	2.5%	--
YEARS TAUGHT		$\bar{X}$= 6.96*** SD= 5.1	$\bar{X}$= 13.17*** SD= 5.23	$\bar{X}$= 8.15 SD= 7.08
YEARS TAUGHT IN PRESENT DISTRICT		$\bar{X}$= 1.8** SD= 3.75	$\bar{X}$= 8.72** SD= 7.6	$\bar{X}$= 5.79 SD= 8.44
TRAINING SITE				
	In-state	25%	22.5%	12.5%
	Out-of-State	10%	22.5%	7.5%

The differences were tested using a χ test

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 2: Conditions for Professional Practice in Rural, Urban, and Suburban School Districts

Dimension		Rural (N=14)	Urban (N=18)	Suburban (N=8)
Number of Attendance Centers Assigned				
	One	22.5%	27.5%	20 %
	Two	12.5%	5 %	---
	Three or more	---	17.5%	---
Assignment as a Counselor				
	Full-time	22.5%	37.5%	20 %
	Part-time	12.5	7.7%	---
Student-Counselor Ratio		$\bar{X}$= 261.78 * SD= 165.03	$\bar{X}$= 490.16* SD= 334.85	$\bar{X}$= 340.75 SD= 67.1
Number of Other Counselors Assigned to Same Attendance Centers				
	0	23.1%	23.1%	10.3%
	1	7.7%	15.4%	2.6%
	2	2.6%	---	2.6%
	3	---	2.6%	5.1%
	4	---	2.6%	---
	5	---	2.6%	---
Supervisor				
	Principal	30 %	40%	17.5%
	Superintendent	5 %	---	---
	Director of Guidance	---	5%	---
	Other	---	---	2.5%
Support Services Available For Referral				
	Speech Clinician	93 %	100%	88 %
	Social Worker	78 %	94%	100 %
	Physician	35 %	42%	24 %
	School Psychologist	93 %	94%	100 %
	Rehab Counselor	42 %	42%	24 %
	Special Educator	50 %	94%	76 %
Percent of Time Secretary Assigned to Counselor		$\bar{X}$= 5%	$\bar{X}$= 27%	$\bar{X}$= 65%

$p < .01$ **

TABLE 3: Percent of New Counselors Assigned Mentors By Rural, Urban, Suburban School Districts

Mentor	Rural	Urban	Suburban
Not Assigned to Counselor	30% (N-12)	35% (N-14)	12.5% (N-5)
Assigned to Counselor	5% (N-2)	10% (N-4)	7.5% (N-3)

TABLE 4: Concerns Encountered By New Counselors and Source of Help By Rural, Urban, and Suburban School District.

Concern	Type of School District	Frequency of Concern	no one	s.	f.	t.	p.	S.	c.	o.
Client:	Rural (N= 9)	72%	1	1	-	3	1	1	2	5
	Urban (N=14)	84%	2	2	-	2	6	-	5	2
	Suburban (N= 7)	84%	-	1	-	-	3	-	3	1
Presentation:	Rural (N= 6)	42%	2	-	-	2	2	-	2	-
	Urban (N=10)	60%	-	2	1	1	3	-	9	-
	Suburban (N= 1)	12%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Unit:	Rural (N= 5)	35%	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
	Urban (N= 5)	30%	4	-	-	1	3	1	2	1
	Suburban (N= 2)	24%	3	1	-	2	2	-	-	-
Parent:	Rural (N= 7)	50%	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
	Urban (N= 8)	48%	2	-	-	3	4	2	3	1
	Suburban (N= 3)	36%	-	-	-	2	3	-	1	2
Testing:	Rural (N= 4)	28%	2	-	-	3	2	2	-	-
	Urban (N= 5)	30%	1	-	1	2	2	1	4	-
	Suburban (N= 2)	24%	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Teacher:	Rural (N= 8)	56%	4	-	-	1	1	1	2	1
	Urban (N=12)	66%	1	-	-	5	8	1	5	2
	Suburban (N= 2)	24%	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	1

Key to Table 4

s. = spouse
f. = friend
t. = teacher
p. = principal
S. = Superintendent
c. = counselor
o. = other

Code____

CONDITIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: COUNSELOR'S PERCEPTIONS

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about the conditions encountered by new school counselors. Your candid comments are desired and individual responses will remain confidential.

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE COMPLETE THE ITEMS AS DIRECTED.

COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS

Please provide the following information about yourself.

A. Sex: Female _____ Male _____

B. Age: _____

C. Number of years you taught before accepting your present position: _____

D. Number of years employed in the present school district prior to this academic year: _____

E. Check the highest degree obtained:

Bachelors Degree: _____ Masters plus 30 or Ed.S.: _____

Masters Degree: _____ Doctorate: _____

F. Your assignment as a counselor is: full-time _____ OR part-time _____

G. Indicate the location of the institution at which you received your preparation in counselor education: In-State _____ OR Out-of-State _____

H. Were you ever employed in another school as a counselor? NO____ YES ____
(If yes, indicate for how many years: _____)

I. How many counseling positions did you interview for before accepting your present position?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 More

J. How many counseling positions were you offered before accepting your present position?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 More

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

K. According to the following definition please check the type of school district in which you counsel:

____ Rural: Less than 2,500 in population or less than 1,000 persons per square mile for extended city aeas.

____ Urban: Greater than 2,500 population.

____ Suburban: Contiguous to urban areas and greater than 2,500 population or 1,000 persons per square mile.

OVER PLEASE

L. Please indicate the number of students you serve as counselor (counselor/student ratio): ___

M. Please indicate the number of attendance centers (buildings) you serve as counselor: ____

N. Please indicate what grade levels you are to serve. _____

O. Please indicate the number of OTHER counselors assigned to the attendance centers (buildings) you serve: _____

P. To whom are you directly responsible:

___ Principal(s)
___ Superintendent
___ Director of guidance
___ Other (Please specify_____)

Q. Check which professionals are available through your school district or area education agency for referral or consultation:

___ Speech clinician
___ Social worker
___ Physician
___ School psychologist
___ Rehabilitation counselor
___ Special educator
___ Other (Please specify_____)

R. Please indicate what percentage of time (e.g., ten percent, twenty percent) a secretary is assigned to assist you: _____ _____

S. If this was your first year as a counselor in the present school district did you have reduced professional responbilities: NO ____ YES ____ (If yes, please estimate what percentage of your professional responsibilities were reduced: _____).

T. Did you have discretionary funds available to you to support professional activities (e.g., travel to professional meetings): YES ____ NO ____

U. Were you assigned a "mentor" (someone to guide your transition to the role of counselor): NO ___ YES ____ (If yes, please specify the role of the person in the school district: _____

COUNSELOR ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

The role of a counselor is extremely complex and the actual functions vary among schools. To assist in understanding what sources of assistance were available to you in your transition to the role of counselor your candid responses to the following vignettes would be appreciated. These are "typical" types of concerns new counselors experience in the transition. Please indicate if you had a <u>similar</u> concern and check the <u>one</u> individual who provided the greatest assistance in the resolution:

Vignette 1: You have established a counseling relationship with a student. The relationship has not progressed well in the last two sessions. You are uncertain as to whether you should refer the student or continue the relationship.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO ____ YES _ _
If yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ No one
____ Spouse
____ Friend
____ Teacher
____ Principal
____ Superintendent
____ Counselor
____ Other (Please specify_____)

Vignette 2: You were asked to make a presentation to the School Board about the guidance program. This is your first presentation describing your activities as counselor and you are somewhat uncertain as to how best to handle it.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO __ _ YES ____
If yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ Friend
____ Teacher(s)
____ Principal
____ Other counselor
____ Superintendent
____ No one
____ Spouse
____ Other (Please specify_____)

Vignette 3: You were assigned the responsibility to teach a unit on self-awareness and decision-making as part of the regular curriculum. In the past, the unit was perceived by both the faculty and students as a waste of time. You want to change those perceptions of the unit.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO ____ YES ____
If yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ Teacher(s)
____ Principal
____ Other counselor
____ Superintendent
____ No one
____ Spouse
____ Friend
____ Other (Please specify_____)

Vignette 4: You want to increase your involvement with parents. There seems to be a lack of parent education opportunities within the community and the school administration wants to provide such a program. You are given the responsibility for the development of delivery of such a program.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO ____ YES ____
I" yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ Teacher(s)
____ Principal
____ Other counselor
____ Superintendent
____ No one
____ Spouse
____ Friend
____ Other (Please specify_____)

OVER PLEASE

Vignette 5: You have noticed that the information gathered through the testing program is simply filed. After reviewing the information you realize that the results have implications for the school and the faculty are reluctant to examine it. The principal is aware of the information but is too "busy" with other issues.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO____ YES____
If yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ Principal
____ Other counselor
____ Superintendent
____ Teacher
____ Spouse
____ Friend
____ No one
____ Other (Please specify_____)

Vignette 6: You have a group of students you want to meet with to discuss some of the stress that is being experienced at home. Some of the stress at home is effecting the student's work at school. The situation is complicated by the fact the faculty believes the students should not miss classes and you have limited experience as a group counselor.

Have you encountered this "type" of situation this year? NO____ YES____
If yes, who helped you in its resolution?

____ Other counselor
____ Superintendent
____ Teacher
____ Principal
____ Friend
____ No one
____ Spouse
____ Other (Please specify_____)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.